

THE VALUE OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE  
HIGH SCHOOL IN PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL  
UNDERSTANDING

MARY JEAN HARRIS





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MARY JEAN HARRIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the require-  
ments for the degree of Master of Arts in the  
Graduate School of Florida Southern College

1949



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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Acknowledgment is herewith made to Dr. C. F. Murray, and Dr. C. A. Vannoy, for their untiring efforts and advice, and to Dr. W. G. Fletcher and Dr. C. A. Vannoy who served as readers of this thesis.

Mary Jean Harris  
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## CHAPTER I

### FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

#### The Problem

##### General Statement

If the One World for which we are so desperately striving today -- however much a reality it may have become with regard to a number of basic issues of an economic, social and political nature -- is not to remain a hopeful aspiration as far as unity and accord among the nations are concerned, efficient knowledge of languages will be more necessary than any other basic educational equipment to achieve this reality. This statement is based on the fixed belief that freedom from prejudice and provincialism through a mutual understanding of peoples by one another is the true basis of peace. Perhaps the words of Archibald MacLeish, a representative in the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, may carry conviction: "Not merely understanding between governments or privileged individuals," he states, "but a human sense of each other as human beings, is the only climate in which peace can breathe."

##### Specific Problem

The specific problem of this study is to determine



the need for teaching certain foreign languages in high schools. The scope of understanding is becoming more international than national; the time distance between nations is becoming shorter and shorter. Therefore, if the student of today and tomorrow is to learn and move freely, he must have knowledge of languages on an international scale.

#### Delimitations

This study will be limited specifically to four languages: Spanish, Latin, German, and French. These are the foreign languages which are taught most in particular sections of the United States in high schools; therefore, the study of these four languages is feasible.

#### Basic Assumptions

Foreign languages do have a place in the high school curriculum; however, it must be assumed that certain foreign languages taught in high schools have a minimum value in promoting international relations.

#### The Need For the Study

There is today a greater awareness than ever of the role of languages in the world. Men's thoughts and ideologies leap frontiers with incredible speed. Whether they deal with fact or propaganda, they have to be translated with an understandable medium. They have to be communicated.



While English is undoubtedly the language used by the greatest number of people on the earth today, as a native tongue, and as a second language, it stands to reason that English alone is not adequate. Hundreds of millions of the earth's inhabitants do not use English and have no ready access to it. Hence there is the need for acquaintanceship with other tongues.

"In early American schools languages were serviceable in producing the refinement and polish necessary for intelligent, well-bred citizens. They were the sources of profit and of religious understanding."<sup>1</sup>

Only in part do our schools reflect this world awareness of this modern linguistic need. This study is designed to point out the values and the great need for the teaching of foreign languages in the high schools.

#### Incidence of the Problem

There is among present day educators a sound recognition that the need for a thoroughly broadminded and liberally educated generation of men has never been greater than it is today, but that the opportunity for mass education likewise has never been more favorable than at present. To seize this opportunity now means to face not only the present but also the future. It means sowing the seed from which the

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1. Leonard, J. Paul, Secondary School Curriculum, 1946  
p. 9



responsible human being and citizen of tomorrow will grow.

### Procedure

This study of a contemporary problem involves a program of wide reading and careful review of current literature in the field of foreign languages and secondary education. It includes the teaching of these languages and the ramifications of that teaching. However, it was found, after much reading, that the field which is being studied and its various problems had been sufficiently investigated and studied and that much of this reading material was repetitious. Since this is a current problem, most of the reading must be in the realm of current literature available on this subject both in books and periodicals.

"An analysis of the present philosophy concerning the study of the foreign languages reveals that the following points of view are quite generally accepted today:

1. An organic conception of language as the active process of communicating feelings, wants, or ideas. This is reflected in more significant choice of thought-content as the medium for learning the language, for example, the emphasis on Latin America in Spanish courses.

2. It is also reflected in increasing attempts to evaluate outcomes in the way of information, attitudes, insights, etc. acquired through the medium of the language or while learning the language.



3. It is also reflected in a return to the Aristotelian conception of learning to do by doing and of letting theory grow out of the need for insight, for example, start doing before theorizing.

4. It is also reflected in a revival of interest in the conversational objective, especially in Spanish, about 1940.

5. It is further reflected in significant attempts to evaluate outcomes in terms of life applications.<sup>2</sup>

Producing or changing the emotional aspects and the moving moral forces, as well as the physical ones, is currently evident in the teaching of English and foreign languages in the American high schools.

By the end of World War II, the need for teaching foreign languages and the techniques with which to teach these languages had received more publicity than any other phase of the educational program set up by the Armed Forces. Because we were fighting a global war and millions of American soldiers were abroad and coming into contact with many languages and civilizations, different from their own, the public showed tremendous interest in foreign language distinctly. There has never been as great demand for foreign language dictionaries, conversation manuals and grammars, and courses by way of recordings. Leading newspapers of

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2. Gruhn, W. T., and Douglass, H. R., The Modern Junior High School, 1947, pp. 150-151



the country carried full-page advertisements urging readers to start immediately learning foreign languages the quick and easy way. "If a baby can talk them, why not you"?<sup>3</sup> was the catchy slogan of one recording firm.

More and more people are realizing the need for increased study of foreign languages. What takes place at the United Nations sessions is illuminating in this respect. There are five official languages at the United Nations sessions. They are Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. Of these, there are two working languages into which all speeches are translated -- English and French. English and French were accepted by a committee of linguistic experts meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, as the two universal auxiliary languages to be recommended to UNESCO for its basic educational program. Including these two, eight regional auxiliary languages were suggested: Russian, Arabic, Spanish, Hindustani, Chinese, Malay, and various dialects now in use.

Our schools reflect only partly the world awareness of this modern linguistic need, as I have stated before. Some two million students, out of a total enrollment of more than seven million, take foreign languages in our public high schools. Almost half of those language students take Latin. The others are very unevenly divided among Spanish,

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3. Teachers College Record, December, 1947, Vol. 49, No. 3, p. 179



French, German, and Italian. Students enrolled for the first two comprise probably 80 to 95 per cent of all modern foreign language students.<sup>4</sup> At the secondary level there are no Chinese, Russian, Arabic, or Hindustani. Whether we consider foreign language study as strictly utilitarian or cultural, administrators should give it a proper place in the curriculum.

It has been said by educators that "teaching languages is teaching the technique of classifying, sorting, ordering, clarifying experiences -- the technique of thinking straight."<sup>5</sup>

What are some of the most urgent problems? They are more careful and earlier selection of students, and accompanying that, greater concentration on one language with a view to laying a solid foundation leading to mastery. Two years of fewer than two hundred clock hours of exposure per year in the average high school course is not enough when usual conditions of student selection and teaching prevail. We know that the ideal age for foreign language study is between ten and twelve years of age.<sup>6</sup> If we delay this initial linguistic contact, we do not get as much spontaneity, naturalness, and imitative ability. Older students are more self-conscious about speaking and repeating. They want more mature material which is not often available for beginners. However, the problem of an adequate knowledge of English grammar causes

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4. Ibid, p. 184

5. Leonard, J. Paul, Secondary School Curriculum, 1946, pp. 191-192

6. Teachers College Record, December, 1947, Vol. 49, No. 3, p. 186



foreign language to be a high school elective instead of a required course in the elementary grades.

In a report from the Panel on Language Committee on the UNESCO Program, it was stated that "the panel recommends that the National Commission, and UNESCO, give greater recognition to the fact that inability to communicate readily through the medium of language is a major barrier to international understanding and peace."<sup>7</sup> It was also stated that "the United States National Commission in this country, and the other national commissions each in its own country, initiate and actively support expansion of the study of foreign languages by the most modern and scientific methods in order to promote the mutual understanding of differing ways of thinking and acting in the international community"<sup>8</sup> and "that the United States Commission recommend to school systems and administrators increased and improved teaching of foreign languages in the grade schools in the United States, and that provision be made for pupils who have successfully begun the study of a foreign language in grade school to continue it in secondary school without interruption."<sup>9</sup> It also recommended that "all teachers of foreign languages include in their class programs an increased amount of material conducive to international understanding, using such cultural

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7. School and Society, August 7, 1948, Vol. 68, No. 1754, p. 93

8. Loc. cit.

9. Loc. cit.



and informational content as a basis for foreign language practice."<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Fred S. Durham<sup>11</sup> of the University of Michigan says that Americans hold a strategic position. We have the nationals of all nations with whom we have relations. At least we have a sufficient number of their nationals to serve as a nation.

If foreign students do not attend these foreign language classes regularly, it would be very helpful to ask them to attend the classes from time to time to help promote conversation in the language itself. Speaking the language with a native of the country is one of the best ways of promoting conversation.

I see no reason why language study, as a vital part of general education and cultural background of a student, should not train all the faculties, and develop, insofar as it can, those which have been neglected in earlier training. The privilege and duty of a foreign language teacher should indeed be a challenge to him. He should consider it a very important task which has been set forth for him to accomplish. As Henry Grattan Doyle puts it: "Ours is an apostleship of daily demands, daily achievements, and daily satisfactions, akin, in my way of thinking, to that of the clergyman, the physicians, and of all those who minister to human needs and work

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10. Loc. cit.

11. School and Society, July 24, 1948, Vol. 68, No. 1750, p. 49



for human conciliation and adjustment. We don't talk about such things, but I never knew a successful and happy language teacher who didn't obviously have this feeling of consecration to the task, of solemn pride in his or her profession, of deep and lasting satisfaction in having chosen it above all others."<sup>12</sup>

Foreign languages taught in the high school "develop correct mental habits, historical and cultural background, a right attitude toward social situations, and a capacity for literary appreciation; the student would also obtain enabling incentives from a closer acquaintance with some of the great personalities of history. If he were studying Latin, it would be Roman history -- Caesar, Vergil, and Cicero -- a feeling of respect for the past and increased capacity for having accomplished well a piece of strenuous intellectual work and consequent effect upon the character."<sup>13</sup>

In teaching a foreign language to a high school student, the job of the teacher is not only one of teaching the language itself, but also one of acquainting these students with the customs and cultures of the people whose language they are learning. To bring even two individuals into the light and warmth of understanding and goodwill is in itself no small accomplishment, and the opportunities are endless in this field.

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12. Education, October, 1948, Vol. 69, No. 2, p. 122

13. Leonard, J. Paul, Secondary School Curriculum, 1946 pp. 252-253



Language is one of the points of intersection in that network of habit and choice which is the pattern of our human behavior.

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed. These defenses cannot be constructed when ignorance of each other's ways and lives exists. We should understand that this ignorance has existed throughout the history of mankind, and that it is because of suspicion and mistrust among the peoples of the world that their differences have all too often broken into war. We should be aware and should have accessible to us a free exchange of ideas and knowledge. Ways and means of communication between the people of the world must be increased and developed. These means should be for the purposes of mutual understanding and a true and perfect knowledge of each other's lives. Our education should always be aimed at breaking down barriers of suspicion and mistrust -- education for international understanding.

Education for international understanding demands the use of swifter, more economical and more effective methods of second language teaching. There should be more cooperation between linguists and language-teaching experts. These persons should utilize teaching of languages to increase mutual understanding of peoples.

"Little is said of education for the air age, atomic



age, world citizenship, international and intercultural understanding without the mention of the need for foreign languages. It is the foundation stone for any of these purposes. We have to meet the anti-intellectualism that is characteristic of educational thinking."<sup>14</sup>

As an adult nation, and a dominant figure in world affairs, it is imperative that we should support the present trend of broadening the study of foreign languages to include not only a few important languages, but also Oriental, Slavic, and Near Eastern languages as well. Our contacts with other nations are certain to increase, and permanent influence will be based largely upon how well a large percentage, not merely a small choice group, of our population understands and can communicate with people of other nations.

We must come to the point of teaching an understandable foreign language course, not just strict grammar rules by which we illustrate sentences and simple stories. We must stop teaching imaginary languages. As anyone knows who has studied English either in high school or college, the English language is not generally spoken according to all those rules we were compelled to learn to pass an English grammar course. Rather, we have our own interpretations of how to express ourselves, and they do not always comply with these grammar rules over which we labored so strenuously.

The language courses we teach in high schools should

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14. Ibid, p. 71



be practical ones. For example, a person may take French in high school for two years, learning these rules and simple sentences we have just spoken of, then visit the country where it is spoken -- and to his surprise, he is lost! Why? Because his French course was not a practical one. The high school student must be taught a language which he may use in a shop in a country where the language is spoken. He must know how to trade. If he wants to ask directions or take a bus to another place, he should be able to inquire intelligently in the language. If he attends a church, he must be taught the type of language that the ordinary minister would use. A lecture heard in France might not be in perfectly spoken French.

Our language courses now recognize standard grammar and punctuation. They are taught often for understanding rather than for practice. A student who has been through a high school language course, whether it be Italian, French, Spanish, or German should be able to walk through the streets of Rome, Paris, Madrid, or Berlin, according to the language which he studied, and be able to talk intelligently with the people he meets.

Colloquialisms should be taught, for these languages have their own characteristic expressions as do we in this country. It might be wise to show some of the movies from these various countries, not just once, but repeatedly, so



that the student might better understand the spoken language of that particular country.

Trade journals might be examined in these foreign language classes in order to show the students how trade is carried on, between the countries. The Latin American countries especially, have good and interestingly written trade journals. These are attractive, have well-written and illustrated advertisements, and show anything from dental supplies to shoes.<sup>15</sup>

Again, this language taught in our high schools must be one that will be worthwhile after the student has finished high school. All too often, the emphasis is placed on the students who will enter college upon graduation. Although this emphasis has its rightful place, it should not be stressed above other practical aims, because such a small percentage of these students enter college. "Along with the language should be taught information of the other countries; for example, the high schools of foreign countries would be an interesting study."<sup>16</sup>

The classes should keep abreast of the contemporary happenings. During the Nuremberg trials, a German class might have had that as a special study.

Modern language teaching, of all high school subjects, is the most entrenched in sterile traditionalism. It must undergo some changes in order to promote better international understanding.

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15. Education Digest, November, 1948, Vol. 15, No. 3.,  
p. 36

16. Loc. cit.



## CHAPTER II

### WHY CONTINUE LATIN IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM?

"The Latin grammar school, the oldest establishment of secondary education, emphasized the study of Latin, and apparently served well its limited purpose of preparing boys for college. Unable to adjust to the changing conditions of American life, it responded but feebly to the growing demands for a broader curriculum."<sup>1</sup>

And so, since the beginning of secondary education, Latin has been taught in secondary schools. A knowledge of Latin, then, as many people consider it today, was the badge of an educated man. However, of what real value is Latin of our high school program today? Does it help promote international understanding?

Whether or not Latin has any value in respect to the promotion of good will internationally, it is, no doubt, taught in the high schools largely because of this heritage.

Latin was taught to men of the armed forces during the war. Then there was a common purpose. Now that we are at peace with our neighboring countries, we must look for a common bond that will serve the interests of peace. We must

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<sup>1.</sup> Edward, N., and Richey, H. G., The School in the American Social Order, pp. 396-397



seek a common language that will promote a common understanding.

While Latin will doubtless be continued in the high school curriculum, we must emphasize the similarities of the language with that of others. The likenesses in traditions and customs should be emphasized rather than the differences which cause misunderstanding and contempt. It would be better for us to concentrate on the similarities between ourselves and other nations, rather than to emphasize the dissimilarities, as we usually tend to do.

The Romans handed down a tradition. They were always looking forward. Sterling Dow has said, "The study of Latin is not merely of a major classical literature and civilization, but also of great medieval tradition of human unity and of freedom under universal law which spans like a mighty arch the procession of the centuries from Rome to our own time."<sup>2</sup>

We should teach our children the very best in art, music, and literature. Surely, the religion we profess came to us from Palestine. We got our heritage of democracy from Greece and Rome: the doctrine that all human beings are born equal regardless of class or creed or geography or color or sex. We got many of our ideas of experimental likes and science, constitutional government, our English language and literature from the Greeks also.

Although Latin is to be retained, there are other ways



than the usual present course of study. For example, the first year of Latin might lead up to some author other than Caesar. A richer vocabulary should be taught in order to stress English words derived from Latin, since it is the source of one half of our words.

Instead of old, traditional stories, we might include some works from the Old Testament, and then in the end of the year, some Vergil. Works selected for use from the Old Testament for reading in Latin would have to avoid religious dogma, because of our theory of separation of church and state.

Several religious faiths and different racial backgrounds might be represented. Is not harmony within heterogeneous groups and among larger groups and nations, with intelligent understanding of differences, exactly what we are working for in education?

If the high school student were taught the Old Testament in this foreign language, he might have a better understanding of it. Many claim the Bible as the greatest of all traditions. The New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule are not merely basic in religion; they also provide the foundations of justice and charity, upon which we have built our civilization.

It must be considered, however, that the oldest forms of life have the longest future. Latin helps us to preserve a certain balance and dignity of mind, together with a sane confidence in the future.



In our study of foreign language in the high schools, we must give a basic knowledge of many religious faiths and different racial backgrounds.

We must integrate in our language studies, whether modern or ancient, the traits of a cultured person: consideration for others, dependability, integrity, and the best that has been said and done with an eye toward the future.

Teachers should not be interested so much in Latin as in the welfare of the boys and girls they are teaching. Dr. Warren C. Seyfert tells us that "the fundamental purpose of the school is to help young people to solve more adequately their contemporary problems and to make such preparation as is possible to solve the problems they are to meet later on, as they live in and endeavor to improve a democratic social setting."<sup>3</sup>

Teachers must help these young people learn to think, to develop the learning experiences.

Latin literature can help open the eyes of many students to human problems and desires of which they have been only dimly aware, or which were but poorly defined in their own minds.

In solving problems it is usually helpful and reassuring to know the leads which other people at other times and under other circumstances have followed in their search



for solutions to similar problems. Latin literature certainly has something to contribute toward this end, even though we must admit that the literature suitable to our adolescents is by no means comprehensive in its coverage of life's difficulties, or its triumphs.

Latin may, however, expand the student's ideas as to how to express one's thoughts and feelings in an effective and convincing manner. It may be a source of personal pleasure and delight.

The Latin literature which we teach in our high schools must be chosen for content value as well as for beauty of form or style. If we are to teach these youngsters how to solve their problems, then we must choose literature appropriate to their problems. The meaning of this literature must make sense.

The Latin teacher, as well as any other classroom teacher, must be somewhat of a philosopher. The literature, if it is to be valid in Latin class, might be of value to other classes, and should be available to these other classes and students.

True, the purpose of teaching is to emphasize both the importance and the appreciation of the ancient Roman culture in relation to our modern American culture, but if this be true, why drive these students to translate fifteen lines a day of Caesar which they don't understand when they have completed the assignment?

In the high school Latin classes, the teacher should



also strive to teach the relationship between English and Latin. In these classes the students practice the analysis of English, its phraseology, in an effort to determine the effect of Latin upon it.

The teacher should ask this question: Do these learning activities or experiences enable pupils to practice the behavior I am trying to teach them?

Are these boys and girls, whether taking Latin or civics or algebra or science, getting a maximum of practice of behavior as nearly as possible like that implied in our instructional aims? Stephen M. Carey of Columbia University gives us these problems of instruction, and these are especially applicable to the Latin curriculum:

1. "In what respects do teachers want students to be different after they have been taught?
2. The teacher must do whatever can be done to make boys and girls desire to change in these respects.
3. Situations or experiences must be selected or devised that will be most apt to bring about the desired learning.
4. There are decisions to be made about ways and means for determining whether or not this learning has occurred."<sup>4</sup>

Since Latin will doubtless be continued, in the high school curriculum, then we must make it a subject that will bring about desirable results rather than make it a subject that the students translate sentences which they do not understand and talk about subjects of Roman culture that they are not applicable to their behavior or problems.

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4. Loc. cit.



## CHAPTER III

### THE PLACE OF SPANISH IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Now that the war is over and peace comes again, there is seen an ever-growing interest in understanding in the hearts and minds of other peoples. One of the best ways of achieving this is through foreign language instruction in the high school curriculum.

In Florida, especially, there is a place for Spanish in the high school curriculum. The means of communication and transportation between the United States and the Central and South American countries have advanced; therefore the people of these countries must respect and understand each other.

If Spanish is to be taught significantly in the high school, it must be essentially functional. Spanish is the language spoken by 120,000 people south of the Rio Grande.

By a kind of contagion the teaching of Spanish in the secondary schools of the United States has acquired some of the characteristics of the teaching of Latin. Many teachers of Spanish have no definite reason for taking it. Ana Figueron of Santiago, Chile, said in an article written for School and Society, "My opinion is that Spanish in many schools is afflicted with the sterility of formalistic, unreal, and obsolete methods of instruction. The teachers cannot speak Spanish or haven't gone to visit a country where Spanish is



spoken, and they know little of Spanish-American civilization, its culture and geography."<sup>1</sup>

In too many classrooms where Spanish is taught, one will find it a dry, dull language, and removed from the true objective. The major emphasis is on grammar.

Why could not the study of Spanish grammar be based on expressions with a definite meaning related to the total experiences and immediate interests of the students? In this manner, the functional use of grammar is not only important for what it is, but also for what it does. Unless the student is able to use the grammar he has learned in actual life situations, it is dead.

If the history of the people and their culture is to be taught in a foreign language class, then it should be accurate. The movies that are shown in many of the high schools are misleading, for they misrepresent the countries. When a student thinks of a South American country, he thinks of a man with a wide-brimmed sombrero sitting in the shade of a cactus tree, instead of the work that the common man does in the field or in the factory in one of these countries.

In the high schools, the early teaching of Spanish should assume international implications in terms of hemispheric solidarity and understanding. To know other people, we must be able to speak with them. We must know their thoughts, aspirations, and their cultural heritage.

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1. School and Society, April 2, 1947, Vol. 66, No. 1701,  
p. 90



At present the accent falls primarily upon learning the grammar and translation from the written page rather than upon learning actually to speak the language. A knowledge of Spanish grammar is not as important as knowing how to speak Spanish.

What is needed for the high school curriculum is the development of a down-to-earth, functional course -- one that is far more than merely the study of a series of letter-forms where students are taught principally to translate and answer or compose business letters in Spanish.

The aims of the course may be summarized as follows:

"1. To give an informative background panorama of Latin America, as a whole, in which students find out about Spanish America the information they are most likely to need.

2. To give, in a practical and uncomplicated approach, the fundamentals and a working knowledge of up-to-date Spanish, with attention to the distinctions between forms common in Spanish America and in Spain. Especial emphasis is placed on Spanish America because of its growing importance in our trade relations.

Each of these two parts complements the other so as to link business to an acquaintance with the foreign countries most often involved. Thus it is a step away from mere emphasis on monetary values and does not entirely slight cultural aspects."<sup>2</sup>

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2. Hispania, February, 1948, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 44, 45



The Spanish course should include a broad survey of the information of Latin America: climate, and general population make-up with their influences on racial and economic history, and how they have determined many phases of their development. The natural resources, with past developments and some prospects for the future should be emphasized. The means of transportation and communication, the manufacturing and industrial development in general, competition and the like should be mentioned.

It would be well to emphasize the psychology of the people as reflected in their way of life and general business practices, bringing in points of comparisons and contrast with those of the United States.

In the process of teaching these things, the fabulous horizons, the patterns of earth, sky, and water, the lifelines and skylines of Spanish, and consequently, the way of life there have been made an innumerable amount of imprints made on these students' minds and enriched their lives. Because of all this, the chances of success for the ones who are destined to have an active part in foreign trade will be greater. All of them will be our best ambassadors of good will as they go about their varied careers. For our part, we have in the process done a little more to help destroy some of the barriers that have kept the Americas from the full development of trade possibilities, just as the giant planes shuttling back and forth across the hemisphere have destroyed the barriers of time and distance. Have we not,



then, indeed helped to advance the cause so near to our hearts, and thought, and brought a step nearer a real and lasting hemisphere pattern of cooperation, a pattern that might be made for the entire world?

The objective in general is to acquire sufficient mastery of the idiom to permit pursuit of work in the Hispanic world, admittedly a strong stimulus, at the same time, toward diligent application.

There have been varied trends in the teaching of modern languages. A generation or two ago the modern foreign languages were making their rather timid appearance on the stage of the American high school curriculum. Classicists looked with a degree of surprise upon these newcomers. The teaching of something other than Greek or Latin was not considered very necessary for the education or cultural elevation of young America. Great educators, impelled by progressive thinking, helped the modern foreign languages. The modern foreign languages were taught with a little less resistance from Classicists than the curriculum-makers.

The ultimate aim of the instructor of a foreign language is to acquaint the student with the spoken and written for the purpose of improvement of international understanding. To achieve this purpose, to develop fluency in the student's spoken Spanish, the instructor should speak at an average speed, using breath-groups instead of pronouncing word by word. The student must be taught to recognize entire sentences, never isolated words. It is very difficult for students to understand word-groups when the instructor has ac-



customed them to hearing Spanish spoken distinctly, with every word pronounced individually. The student should be taught from the first lesson to link words.

The immediate purpose of the teaching of Spanish is the improvement of instruction in the use of the language as a living medium, leading toward a better mutual understanding between peoples, and of cultures and ways of life of the United States and Spanish-speaking countries.

"By the use of meaningful content materials, and by the teaching of Spanish so that insights are developed into the way of thinking, and the way of living in the other American nations, teachers can build mutual respect and tolerant understanding. Since teachers in a democracy are largely motivated by altruistic purposes, teachers of Spanish can contribute to the building of post-war friendship on a basis of sincerity and good will. It is only on a long range program, however, that the coming generations may be taught of the contributions of our life from the other peoples of the Americas. By such a program teachers of Spanish can overcome the idea that our Good Neighbor Policy has been no more than a war emergency and can secure greater respect on the part of the other nations."<sup>3</sup>

In order to carry out a program such as this, teachers of Spanish in the high schools have the obligation of teaching their purposes to their pupils that other Americans are

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3. A Brief Guide to Teaching Spanish in the Secondary Schools, Bulletin, No. 52, 1946, p. xi.



seeking the attainment of ideals similar to ours; they are obligated to help their pupils to understand some of the forces that have controlled the development of Spanish American republics; they are obligated to help their pupils to interpret and appreciate the cultural, social, scientific, and economic contributions from other nations.

The problems facing a functional Pan Americanism are more than diplomatic or political. Not only must the youth of the Americas be taught to live in accordance with the principles of Pan Americanism, and as an extension, with the principles of international cooperation on a world-wide basis, but we must also help the youth of the Americas to master one of the most important tools for international understanding; that is, language.

The most popular single factor influencing people to major in Spanish is the desire to know more about the culture of the countries where the language is spoken. The vocation which one usually has in mind if he intends to use it, is that of teaching; however, the usual end in view is to speak Spanish.

Instead of making conversation, literature and grammar the three most important things in our high school Spanish classes, we should strive for mastery of conversation, translation from English into Spanish, and original composition.

Another way to make the language interesting is for the students to correspond with students in Spanish-speaking



countries. This way, many letters are received and many friendships made whereby the students learn the culture and language first-hand.

In high school Spanish, more emphasis should be held on conversation. The students should also be given additional work in commercial subjects and letter-writing if they plan to live in a Spanish-speaking country and work.

Exchange scholarships are also promoting international understanding.

We should use the natives of Spanish-speaking countries in our high school classes as much as possible. Someone in the community may be from one of these countries, and it would be very interesting to have him speak to the Spanish classes. He could tell the class more of the culture because he has lived in this country, than could the author of the Spanish text, who probably has only read about it. Later, in the advanced Spanish class, one might ask a Spanish-speaking person to speak to the class in Spanish.

Now, more than before, we are becoming peace-conscious. It is the people of the world who make the government and it is their will that is carried out. The diplomatic relationships between our country and others constitute our foreign policy, and will this foreign policy be based on ignorance, suspicion, prejudice and hate? Upon organized education rests the very grave responsibility of the development of a cooperative spirit.



In our high school Spanish classes, we must be concerned with the composition of a foreign language; we must teach our students to read, to write, to speak, and translate it; we must train them also to think in a foreign language. We must give our students an insight into the manners, habits and customs of the people whose language we are teaching, thus developing an understanding of peoples based upon a knowledge of their way of life and an appreciation of their culture gained through the medium of a study of their language.

The future trade and industrial hopes of this section of the United States lie to the South with its great and relatively undeveloped market in the Caribbean. Our high schools must aid in this trade development by training the future business men in the language, customs and habits of their clients. We should not teach these young people how we differ from our Spanish speaking neighbors, rather, how we are alike.

Instead of the Hollywood version of the Spanish caballero sitting in the shade of the tall cactus strumming his guitar, we should give the student a true picture of the Spanish-speaking people.

We must teach our students of Spanish what these people are like. The Spanish-speaking people with whom we trade represent the attitude of our business men, and this attitude is extant because of the ignorance of what they can expect. In teaching Spanish, not only elements of the language, but



also a sympathetic understanding of the people's way of life should be stressed. There are great possibilities in the future trade and government service; thus our students should have a knowledge of the Spanish language.

We are now in the post-war period, trying to readjust ourselves to a life and world of peace. If better relationships and better understandings could be established between the youth of the world, such bloody conflicts could be avoided. We are thoroughly convinced that, if we can promote better understandings between the youth of the world, the first milestone in the elimination of war will have been passed.

Since we are so near South and Central America, it is wiser to teach the Spanish-American accent rather than the Castilian.

It would be both interesting and educational to bring into the Spanish class ads from Spanish newspapers. Much might be gained from turning on the radio to a short-wave program to see what Spanish words the class can understand.

The Spanish teacher must emphasize aural skill as well as reading and speaking skill, because it is imperative that we understand the person with whom we are talking.

The purpose of our good neighbor policy has been stated thus: "To cement hemispheric solidarity and to give an insight into the lasting influence of Spain in our hemis-



phere and an appreciation of its contribution to our culture."<sup>4</sup>

Because of an increasing need for an awareness of an interdependence on the part of the individual and of nations of this world, language teaching needs to be based on a philosophy of language and life which prepares people to work together effectively, peacefully, and with appreciation, tolerance, and understanding. All of this leads to a satisfactory philosophy of life.



## CHAPTER IV

### IS FRENCH A DEAD LANGUAGE?

All language teachers insist on a certain amount of memorization in their classes. The results will be better if a fable or two of La Fontaine is chosen instead of using model sentences and similar uninteresting selections in a French class. Herein lies the opportunity for the dramatic gestures and the unrestrained acting which come naturally to the adolescent in high schools.

This type exercise will prove easier for dictation and will lead to self-confidence and poise, eventually growing into a skit for an assembly program. Of course, any assembly program should begin with Scripture reading, and it might be a novelty (if the Scriptures may be so classed) to have this read in French. Language courses need not be all work and no play. We should make things as easy as possible; we should require reading in the language itself.

Movies in French and English will be of a great help to high school French classes.

Margaret Smith Gants of Springfield, New Jersey<sup>1</sup> tells of her French classes supporting a bombed school in France for

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1. Modern Language Journal, November, 1948, Vol. 32, No. 7, p. 524



two years. In this connection, many letters were received and many friendships made. Her class is even printing a school newspaper in French, with gossip column and all!

"That nation is most civilized which makes much of the cultivation of the mind and spirit. Our music, art, and language are of European heritage; our religious, philosophical, ethical, and moral thought runs in the same channel and uses the same concepts as European thought."<sup>2</sup> Should it not, then be one of the primary aims of education to make our students intelligently aware, not merely of their heritage, but also of their participation in all this? The educated man of today must know whatever languages were used by men who wrote works of genius in our Western tradition.

Do not our artists and musicians speak an international language? Our students should have a real love for the language of these foreign cultures, for their wealth of literature, and a real knowledge of the country and its people. We need to know more about other nations, and above all, about the European democracies. We need to understand their ideals and ideas so that we may work together for world peace.

"According to some educators, French is considered a corrective for the American temperament."<sup>3</sup>

"The study of foreign language is one of the greatest liberalizing and civilizing influences in the high school cur-

2. French Review, January, 1949, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 256

3. Belting, P. E., and Clevenger, A. W., The High School at Work, 1939, p. 398



riculum, and learning a foreign language is a literal and liberal education."<sup>4</sup> The objectives of teaching French in high school should be a reading ability, a thorough knowledge of language structure, a good understanding of the language when spoken, a limited understanding and ability in self-expression and a good understanding of foreign life and culture in France.

The great emphasis in recent years on conversational French has led to valuable improvements in teaching methods, but there is still in many instances a serious deficiency in the training of teachers of French.

In too many French classes, as well as other foreign language classes, too much importance is given to the routine translation of English novels or stories into French. Such procedure should have only a small place in such a course.

In a high school French course, the student should study the sentence as an instrument for the expression of ideas or for descriptive amplification.

The use of the bulletin board is a very effective way to display prints of French art, clippings from French newspapers or from English newspapers about French.

A French club should be organized. If time is not found in class for the students to learn some of the French slang phrases, they might be learned in a club of this sort. Perfect sentence structure is not the sole aim, for the French-speaking people do not speak perfect French any more than we English-speaking people do speak perfect English. At these



club meetings, reports might be given of French science and research.

French, like English, is a living accent, spoken in an immense variety of accents and intonations, depending largely upon the region, and making use of colloquialisms, archaisms, neologisms, and all sorts of other linguistic phenomena.

"French Canada is one of the greatest centers of French culture in the world."<sup>5</sup> Since it is near to us, we might get an abundance of excellent material from this region.

The vitality of French creative art along with literature surviving the years of war and destruction, is one of the lasting effects of this great conflict. Even though France and the United States were far apart, and their modes and ways of thinking might appear different, fundamentally there was a confronting similarity between the two peoples.

Literature per se in the high school does not mean merely literature in the English language. Its study, therefore, involves the problem of reading either in translation or in foreign languages. It will often be necessary to use translations, but I believe that it is of utmost importance for students to pursue at least one foreign language, ancient or modern, until they have read some significant literature in that language. Otherwise, the language cannot achieve the larger aims of literary study. Secondary schools can render great service by providing for relatively early study of foreign language, and for fair mastery of a single foreign lang-



uage instead of allowing merely superficial training in more than one language other than English.

French films can be used to a good advantage on any level of the teaching of French, as any other modern foreign language, have much conversation in the classes. We should in French, as any other modern language, have an almost completely oral approach.

We should, as teachers of foreign language, make the language live. We should teach that neither race nor color makes a difference between peoples; so far as the heart, feelings, sentiment, and mind are concerned, there is little distinction. However, differences do occur in training, background and opportunity. After studying French, the students should want to learn more of the French people and their culture.

In this age, most modern language teachers are convinced that one learns to speak by using conversational forms over and over again in a natural situation.

"In teaching a language two objectives may be considered: the learner studies either for a practical, purely utilitarian purpose, or he attempts to reach a degree of intellectual perfection."<sup>6</sup>

Every language has its evolution, correlated to the evolution of its nation and country. Therefore, teaching of a language ought to include instruction about the people and their country, and there are many phrases in language studies



when a cultural approach is organic and necessary.

The foreign language teacher has to work, not only on the language, but also on increasing his own knowledge of the cultural background of the language.

Language and civilization are interrelated; this is a fact which teacher and student should always keep in mind. The cultural approach undoubtedly lends more life and meaning to the study of languages.

One of the prime aims in education today is the development of reflective thinking. If the student, having mastered the mechanics for a foreign language, for example, can then be encouraged to use this knowledge to create something original, we can feel that we have accomplished more than mere instruction; we have gone one step higher to education.

The study of French gives us a better understanding of the organization of English; it gives us the source of a great many words we use in English; we can seldom understand a piece of literature unless we read it in the original, because a masterpiece cannot adequately be translated except by a genius; French opens to us a vast storehouse of beautiful and exquisite literature; it makes available to us important contributions to the history of philosophy and educational benefits of such writers as Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu and others.

The study of French introduces to us a language which is different from English in its simplicity, clarity, and pre-



cision.

Language is important; it is vital to our understanding of a foreign people, but it does not tell us the whole story in itself.

We must know something of the physical and economic aspects of the country, its art, history, religion, and racial qualities -- in other words, its culture. Even today, after the second World War pointed up our ignorance, there are teachers who wish to emphasize language to the exclusion of other elements which make up life. They seem to think that language and literature are something apart from the rest of living. Successful teaching must include an interpretation of the culture of the people whose language is being studied.

The Frenchman, speaking generally, has never had the opportunity for travel. He has not had automobiles in which to take trips, or money to spend. He has, during all of his life, been surrounded by various controls, often irritating, administered by those whom the French call les fonctionnaires. During the lives of most contemporary Frenchmen there have been shortages, hence the necessity for scrimping. In many ways he has been made aware of the limitations of raw materials in his country.

Not only are the physical conditions of France, for example, different from those of the United States, but also its history and traditions are notably different. While at



the moment France's political power is at a low ebb, there have been epochs in French history when France was the dominant fixture in Europe and the world. The contemporary Frenchman cannot forget that. He learned of it in his schools and has heard it mentioned many, many times during the past several years when France was under the brutal heel of the German. Since we do not have that kind of tradition, it is practically impossible for an American to understand the feeling of the Frenchman as he thinks of France's glorious past. When the French speak of their past glory, it often causes a smile in America. The teacher of French should make understandable this attitude on the part of the Frenchman.

If understanding of foreign countries and their customs and manners is made active and sympathetic to us, if we know why we have different perspectives, we should be able to evaluate more accurately the suggestions and contributions of whatever nature which may come to us from Europe.

Experience has shown that students are much more interested in a language when it serves as a tool through which they may learn about a country than when they study the language merely for the sake of language. "Many teachers have discovered that elementary linguistics, as they phrase it, can be learned even more effectively when the sentences they give the student contain interesting information about the country and its people."<sup>7</sup>

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7. Modern Language Journal, Vol. 32, No. 4, April, 1948,  
P. 291



At long last the idea is beginning to emerge. It is true that description of a scene in Paris or a description of the people of France and stories directly from her history, is a more attractive way to teach grammar and vocabulary than the old disconnected sentences which had to be translated into French. We are also learning that a story of the French revolution can be understood only if the background is given. However, there still remains probably more than 50% of our teachers who are having their students translate laboriously a French novel or play, or translate some of Hugo's work without explaining the background.

The student who is introduced to the culture of France in an effective manner, will, in later life, be able to read new information about the foreign country with interest and understanding, and he will be, thereby, better equipped to be an intelligent citizen and will have a better understanding of the problems of our foreign policy.

Finally, the very best way to learn about foreign countries, their culture and their traditions, is through the foreign language classroom.



## CHAPTER V

### WHY STUDY GERMAN IN HIGH SCHOOL?

Although it may seem useless to have German in the high school curriculum before one considers the matter thoughtfully; after careful study of the problem, one finds many reasons for offering the subject in high schools.

Today, the reason most students take German is perhaps the attractive positions offered overseas, military and administrative positions in Germany. There are many welfare and charitable positions in Germany and in Europe in the reorganization of the many united efforts to put the world back on its feet. Other reasons for taking German in high school are preparation for advanced degrees, preparation for medical work or work on natural sciences, preparation for the ministry, or to satisfy the requirements for college entrance. However, this interest in foreign language in general is part of the general trend in the American youth's thinking.

A good language course, in order to make the language live, should not consist merely of stereotyped exemplifications of simplified grammatical rules. We must keep the language natural and sound. The study of German in high school should be humanized.

The German teacher should make use of good records, not to supplant the textbook or the teacher, but to supplement



them.

"Wars begin in the minds of men, and from that premise runs straight that we can have peace by teaching it in the schools."<sup>1</sup> Now that the American Military Government is in Germany, many people from this country will be going there.

The plan of the American Military Government is: "1. to keep order in Germany, 2. to put Germany sufficiently on her feet so that she can carry on without subsidy from the American taxpayer, and 3. to carry Germany from a country that has been a menace to the world into one that can be lived with in safety."<sup>2</sup> So far as education goes, fulfilment of the first aim merely means keeping the children off the streets and occupied. The second and third are the important ones. What part can re-education actually expect to play in the attainment of these objectives?

It may be that in time it will prove profitable to tie American efforts close to the German universities and the higher technical colleges, but at the moment the value of such action appears to be doubtful. Too often the sense of this social appears to be doubtful. Too often our sense of responsibility is bounded by the ambition to develop erudite learning and pure research, with little or no concern for the needs of the people. However, for many years to come, it would seem wiser to center attention on agricultural and industrial

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1. Teachers College Record, December, 1948, Vol. 50, No. 3, p. 145

2. Ibid, p. 146



education in the schools, on adult education and extension work, and on every means of applying the advanced techniques already known.

The students we are teaching in high school now are some of the very ones who will be in Germany re-educating the German people. Can it be doubtful that it is of immeasurable value to have German as a part of the high school curriculum?

We Americans are trying to build in Germany a new social order. We must begin with the fact that the Germans lack fundamental ideas and political science. They have no glimmering of the idea of government of checks and balances, with certain delaying processes; whereas the objective of the framers of our government was a system that would be possible under a good man, but not easy for a bad man to run away with.

The students whom we teach to work on this re-education program in Germany must know how to speak the language of the people there. How else will this vast program be a success?

The German people must acquire a habit of self-government before they can safely be set free, and it is we Americans who will have to do the job in this great program of re-education.

We must eliminate hatred, promote understanding between nations, teach good will, develop world citizenship, interchange, students; but before we can do that, we must teach the Germans other things, and at the present, however, the two major



objectives of education are to teach the Germans to use better methods in the shop and on the farm, and to train them to accept individual responsibility. Individual responsibility can be fostered by the development of local government and initiative.

The crux of the problem is to control and operate their schools. The establishment of local initiative and responsibility is more important than anything else. If local self-government is practiced on the schools, it will normally be taught in the schools. This is the way to produce a generation which will know that it cannot hand over its moral and political responsibilities to a Fuehrer.

"Every student must have the opportunity to practice respecting the rights of others, to practice living as a free individual in a society sufficiently complex to restrict his freedom, to practice making decisions that may bring either penalties or rewards; in short to have the opportunity to live as a responsible citizen in a democratic society."<sup>3</sup> This is what we must teach the German people. Only by such experience can one learn the basic principles of human relationships.

"In the native environment the learner lives what he hears, reads or speaks in a foreign language."<sup>4</sup>

We are trying to teach the language, not to impart new knowledge of facts. We must use subject matter familiar to the student as long as such familiarity aids the learning of

3. Educational Forum, March 1949, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 282

4. Modern Language Journal, January, 1948, Vol. 32, No. L, p. 14



the language. Unfamiliar subject matter may be used in increasing amounts as the student's knowledge of the language grows, without interfering with the learning process and even aiding it. It is poor pedagogy for an elementary German reader to start out by talking about German cities, rivers, schools and customs. Familiar subject matter means all the things about life and the world that everybody knows -- our daily life, work and play, the myriad activities of man, animal, and plant; of the city, and the state, the nation, the world, the universe. What a vast treasury to draw upon at will! Here are countless units of knowledge, physical, mental and psychic experience, that are an integral part of the student's being. The mental and psychic associations are all ready-made for us and well made -- so well made that nothing can tear them asunder. We simply substitute foreign for English symbols in these units or patterns and reap the benefit of the student's life-long mental growth.

It goes without saying the student's active participation is an essential part of this approach.

The factor which most greatly affects the number of language positions available is, of course, the condition of our foreign trade. As we all know, the dollar shortage is at present causing a great curtailment in buying from us. However, if we have learned anything from past mistakes in trying to sell without buying; if the existence and the efforts of the World Trade Organization and other international agencies are to mean a great deal; if the increasing demand for



heavy machinery, bathtubs, sewing machines, soda fountain fixtures, automobiles and the like, of which any traveler must be aware; if these result in the increased trade and communication that will be inevitable in even a moderately healthy world; there will be, in coming years, a tremendous growth in international dealings of all kinds.

It is found that more students are studying German than ever before. Young Americans are becoming mature enough to be able to distinguish between what is transitory and what is lasting. They sense the values embedded in the great literature of the German nation; the abiding worth and usefulness of technical German literature in such fields as chemistry, medicine, physics, aerodynamics, and the like; the fine qualities which they feel they have discovered in many individual Germans whom they met or have heard of over there; and the possibility that Americans may long remain vitally involved in Central Europe, which, come what may, will always be the hub of that tremendously important, though unhappy, continent. They feel, too, more or less instinctively, that there will be more work for Americans to do, requiring some knowledge of German. This work, they believe, is an essential thing, and as essential as any which Americans will be able to undertake anywhere for many years to come, more important, even, than the work which General MacArthur and his men performed and are performing in the Far East.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem of this study as stated in the first chapter is to determine the need for teaching certain foreign languages in high schools.

After extensive and intensive reading and study of the literature available concerning foreign languages and their place in the high school, it was found that authorities in this field agree on the necessity for such courses in the high school curriculum.

Foreign language study enables us to be less provincial. It gives us a yardstick by which we can measure more accurately our own language, our culture and our way of living.

It is clear that if a foreign language is properly taught, the students of that language receive a well-balanced picture of the people who speak and write it.

An international educational quarterly published under the direction of Friedrich Schneider<sup>1</sup> has completed its first year of publication. In 1947, Dr. Schneider began once more to publish the unique journal which contains articles, reviews, reports, and abstracts in German, French, and English. The

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1. Modern Language Journal, April, 1948, Vol. 32, No. 4,  
p. 289



content stresses youth problems and religious education.

Circumstances have forced the United States into a position of world responsibility. Whether we are sufficiently informed to accept responsibility wisely is a question. The most pressing problem seems to be Europe. Something must be done to help her. If the hundreds of thousands of students of modern languages in the United States had been given an insight into European thinking and conditions, we would be better prepared nationally to understand post-war Europe. Articles, books, and lectures designed to give the public a picture of Europe today, cannot replace what the foreign language classrooms should have done by teaching a difficult and often dangerous one to improvise public opinion. In an emergency I suppose we must, but it is far better to anticipate problems in foreign affairs and prepare our students so that they may deal intelligently with them. It is not enough that we have a few experts. Ultimately, in a democracy, the people should determine our foreign policy. Even a brief experience studying a foreign language makes it easier to understand that foreigners have different points of view from ours and that therefore foreign relations are not simple. The student is confronted by the fact that the people of other countries do not always express their ideas exactly as we do. They are often different. We must not emphasize minor differences, but we should point out the major ones.

Education today is undergoing definite changes. If



international understanding is to be a reality, foreign language must undergo changes also. Each foreign language teacher must come to the realization that she must not only teach the language, but also the culture and the way of life of each country.



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the first time I have ever seen a bird of this kind.  
I have seen many birds in the woods and fields  
but I have never seen one like this. It is a  
large bird with a long tail and a long beak.  
It has a black head and a white neck.  
The body is brown and the wings are black.  
The tail is long and bushy. The legs are long  
and strong. The feet are large and strong.  
The beak is long and sharp. The eyes are large  
and black. The feathers are long and soft.  
The bird is very active and agile. It can fly  
very fast and can catch insects easily.  
It is a very beautiful bird and I am happy  
to have seen it.

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the 1970s and 1980s, the Chinese government has sought  
to move away from central planning and towards market  
orientated growth, which has led to significant economic  
reform. This has been achieved through a series of measures  
including the establishment of a socialist market economy, the  
privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and the opening up of  
the economy to foreign investment. These reforms have  
led to significant economic growth and development, as well as  
increased poverty reduction. However, the transition to a market  
economy has also brought about social inequality and  
environmental degradation. The government has responded  
to these challenges by implementing policies such as  
rural poverty alleviation programs, environmental protection  
measures, and social welfare programs.











